



# *The Commonwealth of Massachusetts*

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
STATE HOUSE, BOSTON 02133-1054

**FRANK I. SMIZIK**  
15TH NORFOLK DISTRICT  
ROOM 473F, STATE HOUSE  
TEL. (617) 722-2210  
FAX (617) 722-2239

CHAIRMAN  
Committee on:  
Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture

Department of Telecommunications and Energy  
Statement of Representative Frank I. Smizik  
In Opposition to the Cable Franchise Proposal

August 16, 2006



What is the problem:

Currently, the franchising process for each municipality often takes a year or longer. This creates delays for introducing competition into the cable television marketplace, and denies customers choice in cable providers. Different cable providers offer different services, but many communities have little choice in cable television.

What this proposal will do:

The proposal submitted by Verizon would create a standardized franchising process for every city and town in Massachusetts. Each community would have sixty days from the application filing to hold on a public hearing. After this hearing the municipality would have thirty days to either approve or disapprove the application.

Why this proposal is inappropriate to solving the problem:

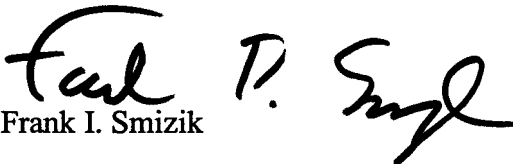
As a home rule state, the cities and towns of Massachusetts have the ability to set policies that are in the best interest of their residents. Local cable television systems provide services to schools and municipal buildings, as well as local cable television programming. Municipalities need the ability to negotiate franchise agreements with cable television providers in order to secure appropriate contracts that promote the public interest. Each community has different resources, priorities, concerns, and infrastructure. Cable television franchise agreements should reflect this individuality.

This licensing process can and should be streamlined. However, the timeline proposed by Verizon is unreasonable. Local officials with experience negotiating these contracts need more time to properly review the initial application, negotiate changes, draft and issue the

franchise licenses. Shortening this process, which often takes a year or more, to a mere ninety days is a drastic and unrealistic step. Consumers suffer when local franchise agreements do not meet the needs, expectations, and unique circumstances of each community. Furthermore, a period of only thirty days between the public comment period and the acceptance or rejection of an application does not allow sufficient time for the public comments to be incorporated into a franchise agreement. This provision would strip the public hearing of any ability to influence the process, and would effectively silence the voice of the community.

Therefore, I urge you to reject the Verizon's proposal to drastically limit the amount of time for municipalities to negotiate franchise contracts. Our communities and their residents deserve the right to negotiate fair and reasonable franchise agreements that protect the public interest, while appreciating each city and towns' unique nature.

Respectfully Submitted

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Frank I. Smizik". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style. The first name "Frank" is written in a large, bold script. The middle initial "I." is written in a smaller, simpler script. The last name "Smizik" is written in a large, bold script, with the "S" being particularly prominent and stylized.

Frank I. Smizik